

A FARM WORKERS' MANIFESTO

(Manifesto: "A public declaration...setting forth intentions and motives."
Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.)

1. Our objective is the rightful inheritance of the disinherited. The rightful inheritance of agricultural workers is neither more nor less than that of everyone else in a democratic society: it includes material benefits; it includes security; it includes legal rights and guarantees; it includes the opportunity to participate fully in political, educational, religious, cultural, and other social institutions; it includes respect, and justice, and freedom; it means the opportunity to influence one's destiny; it means the opportunity to develop to the utmost one's possibilities as a human being.
2. We are ~~working to~~ organizing a farm workers' union because we believe that a union can accomplish these objectives. We do not believe any other type of organization can do so; ~~we do not believe any other type of organization should do so.~~ ^{which}
3. When we say we are "organizing" a union, we mean the word in its proper sense. The dictionary tells us an organization is a "vital, systematic, organic whole." To organize is "to arrange in interdependent parts, each having a special function or relation with respect to the others." Organizing ^{farm workers} a union, then, means building meaningful, enduring sets of relationships between people, pointed toward the more effective accomplishment of the objectives mentioned above. There can obviously be no organization, in this sense, unless the members know one another, have confidence in one another, work together on common problems, dividing the work to be done along lines of individuals' particular talents.
4. A farm worker is anyone who works for wages on a farm, whether he operates a truck, a tractor, or other mechanical equipment; irrigates, sprays, thins, prunes; cultivates; harvests; sorts, grades, washes, packs; distributes boxes, stitches, loads. In all logic and in all morality, the jurisdiction of a farm workers' union should include all these, and every other operation which is performed on the premises of a farm or ranch. We have no intention or desire to extend the jurisdiction of the farm workers' union off the farm, onto highways, or into cities.
5. The union which we are building will insist upon equal opportunity for all agricultural workers, regardless of race, culture, language, ^{citizenship,} religion, national origin, sex, age, or other irrelevant considerations. We shall insist upon equal treatment for all such groups from agricultural employers. And we shall insist upon equal treatment for all such groups in the internal workings of the union. We shall not consider the union has succeeded until all types of farm workers are full participants in the union's activities.
6. Similarly, the union we are building will show no favoritism toward workers in any certain class of crops ^{or crop activity} such as those which have been mechanized vs. those which have not; or toward ladder crops vs. row crops. Only for reasons of overall strategy or limitations of resources will the emphasis of the union be limited, and then only with the knowledge and consent of the membership.

7. We are building a union which shall be as truly democratic as we can make it. We believe democracy is either mixed with the very mortar of organization-building, or the organization never becomes really democratic. Democracy in the farm workers' union will mean such things as the following. It means that people who are in positions to make decisions affecting the lives of ^{farm workers} ~~other people~~ should be answerable to those ~~people~~ ^{farm workers}. It means a faith that ^{farm workers} ~~human beings~~, like all human beings, confronted with alternative courses of action, and appropriate background information, are capable of making rational choices. It means a faith that ~~human beings~~ ^{farm workers}, having made such choices, are ~~able~~ capable of assuming responsibility for the consequences -- even if the choices prove to be wrong, as sometimes they will. It means, furthermore, that these choices should be meaningful choices: for example, the choice between candidates who stand for different things, rather than two candidates who stand for the same thing. Finally, ~~union~~ union democracy means that the leadership shall not only permit the development of such alternatives, but shall encourage and even solicit them.

8. We want to be free men, in the sense we have just described. We are passionately convinced that it is possible for us -- and for mankind generally -- to have, ~~justice~~ ^{more} at the same time, freedom (in this sense) and justice (in the sense of a fair share of the world's bounty). Indeed, we believe you cannot have one without the other. ~~It would be accurate to say we seek justice and democracy, therefore, it would be accurate to say we seek justice through democracy.~~ ^{more} Rather than saying we seek justice and democracy, therefore, it would be accurate to say we seek justice through democracy. This is our ideology.

9. We are building a union which is committed to honesty, openness, and integrity to the great possible extent, at every possible level, and in every possible respect. Economic honesty is only one of the many forms with which we shall be concerned. We are equally concerned with honesty about purposes, ~~and honesty about~~ principles, policies, and programs. We shall go to every reasonable length to avoid creating false hopes, false impressions, false assumptions. This manifesto is a reflection of our desire that everyone know what we stand for and why.

10. We believe that the methods by which an organization pursues its objectives are as important as the objectives themselves. If a union is built through terror, coercion, lying, and cheating, its goals -- however desirable they might have been -- will be poisoned from the very outset. The union will be able to maintain itself only by a continuation of the same methods, and will live in constant dread of a rival which is even more unscrupulous and more clever at lying, cheating, and the use of violence. We therefore propose to employ techniques in our union-building which are consistent with our objectives of democracy, justice, dignity, and honor. Careful respect for such methods may sometimes give the impression that progress is slow. But we shall resist the temptation to compromise our principles because we know that the union which results in the long run will be the more substantial and successful in yielding the types of human advancement we seek.

11. Agricultural workers deserve a union of their own. In accordance with our faith in men's capacities to guide their own destinies, we are

~~xxxxxxxx~~ convinced that farm workers are capable of guiding and supporting their own union. This is not to say that they will be able to build it without help. The United Automobile Workers and the United Steel Workers -- the two largest industrial unions in the country -- would not ~~be~~ have been organized without the assistance of the railroad brotherhoods, the United Mine Workers, and other unions which had been organized earlier. Nobody suggested, 25 years ago, that steel or auto workers ought to be made a "department" or "district" within the mine workers' union. It makes no more sense for people now to suggest that farm workers ought to be merged with some international union whose only claim is that it is wealthy while farm workers are not. At the very least, farm workers themselves are entitled to decide, through some democratic machinery, whether they want to have a union they can call their own, or whether they want to be submerged within some existing union. Outside unions have a duty to help organize the unorganized. But that does not give them the right to take from us our freedom of choice, to make pawns of us, to make us colonials in a labor empire.

12. We want, need, and will gratefully accept assistance from other arms of the labor movement, from students, church groups, political organizations, from any group or unaffiliated individual -- if such assistance flows from a careful study and understanding of the principles set forth above. Such assistance may be financial, it may be in terms of manpower, it may be technical, ~~politic~~ it may be political, it may be moral. It may be great, it may be small. The same principles apply to all. We welcome the support of everyone who can accept in good conscience our vision of what a farm workers' union should be, why it should be, and how it should be constructed.

13. We do not want, do not need, and will ~~not~~ neither solicit nor accept support from individuals or organizations whose principles or practices are contradictory to our own. We shall resist the efforts of such groups as the following to infiltrate the farm labor movement:

- a. Those whose history demonstrates their leaders are untrustworthy in financial dealings.
- b. Those ~~whose policies indicate they~~ ^{which} consider it permissible for some peoples' freedom to be abolished, in some places, at some times, under some circumstances.
- c. Those which believe it is permissible to rely upon force and violence.
- d. Those which permit racial or ethnic discrimination within their own ranks.
- e. Those whose organizing methods have historically been fundamentally anti-democratic: involving sweetheart contracts and the like.
- f. Those which would split the farm labor force, and set hand against hand, along lines of crop, area, skill, or other divisions.
- g. Those which are interested primarily in collecting our initiation fees and dues.
- h. Those which regard farm workers as ignorant, irresponsible, or incompetent people whose ideas and feelings need not be taken into consideration in the construction of programs affecting their lives.

We set these limits in full knowledge of what we are doing: knowing full well how much potential support we may lose. We do so in fairness to

our ~~would be real friends to our~~ self-seeking friends, to our real friends, and to ourselves. We do so because of our convictions that a union built slowly, and painfully, but the right way is better far than a union built quickly, expediently, and in the wrong way. We badly need help from the rest of the labor movement, and the ~~will~~ people of California and the nation. But we do not need it so badly that we must accept it when it is extended for the wrong reasons. We ~~cannot~~ ^{will not} accept ~~it~~ conditional upon our surrendering our rightful ~~mission of justice and~~ ~~liberation~~ inheritance. We will accept help from everyone who ~~shares~~ wishes to share with us in the quest for justice and ~~liberation~~ democracy, through just and democratic methods. We believe ~~that~~ that all who participate sincerely in this quest will find, when it is through, they have gained far more than they have given.